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RECOLLECTIONS OF CURRAN AND SOME OF HIS COTEMPORARIES.

By CHARLES PHILLIPS, Esq.

[Continued from p. 215.]

LORD AVONMORE.

EMINENT in this society, and indeed in every other society of which he was a member, was Barry Yelverton, afterwards Lord Avonmore, the early friend of Curran, the companion of all his dearest enjoyments, the occasional rival of his talents, or victim of his whims, and, to the day of his death, the theme of his idolatry. His character has been drawn by Sir Jonah Barrington, in his admirable work on the Union, with such a powerful hand, and, as I have heard acknowledged by Mr. Curran, with such scrupulous fidelity, that I shall give it an entire transcription.

"It would be difficult to do justice to the lofty and overwhelming elocution of this distinguished man, during the early period of his political exertions. To the profound, logical, and conclusive reasoning of Flood; the brilliant stimulating, epigrammatic antithesis of Grattan; the sweet-toned, captivating, convincing rhetorick of Burgh; or the wild fascinating imagery, and varied pathos of the extraordinary Curran, he was respectively inferior;—but in powerful, nervous language, he excelled them all.

"His talents were alike adapted to publick purposes, as his private

qualities to domestick society. In the common transactions of the world he was an infant; in the varieties of right and wrong, of propriety and error, a frail mortal; in the senate and at the bar, a mighty giant; it was on the bench that, unconscious of his errors, and in his home, unconscious of his virtues, both were most conspicuous. That deep-seated vice, which with equal power freezes the miser's heart, and inflames the ruffian's passions, was to him a stranger: he was always rich, and always poor; but, though circumstances might sometimes have been his guide, avarice never was his conductor: like his great predecessor, frugality fled before the carelessness of his mind, and left him the victim of his liberality, and, of course, in many instances, a monument of ingratitude. His character was entirely transparent, it had no opaque qualities; his passions were open; his prepossessions palpable; his failings obvious; and he took as little pains to conceal his faults as to publish his perfections.

"As a judge, he certainly had some of those marked imperfections too frequently observable in judicial officers: he received impressions too soon, and perhaps too strongly:

he was indolent in research, and impatient in discussion; the natural quickness of his perception hurried off his judgment, before he had time to regulate it, and sometimes left his justice and his learning idle spectators of his reasons and his determination; while extraneous considerations occasionally obtruded themselves upon his unguarded mind, and involuntarily led him away from the straight path of calm deliberation.

"This distinguished man, at the critical period of Ireland's emancipation, burst forth as a meteor in the Irish senate: his career in the Commons was not long—but it was busy and important; he had connected himself with the Duke of Portland, and continued that connexion uninterrupted till the day of his dissolution. But through the influence of that nobleman, and the absolute necessity of a family provision, on the question, of the Union, the radiance of his public character was obscured for ever; the laurels of his early achievements fell withered from his brow; and, after having with zeal and sincerity laboured to attain independence for his country in 1782, he became one of its salemasters in 1800; and, mingling in a motley crowd, uncongenial to his native character, and beneath his natural superiority, he surrendered the rights, the franchises, and the honours of that peerage, to which, by his great talents and his early virtues, he had been so justly elevated."

He and Curran were to dine together at the house of a mutual friend, and a large party was assembled, many of whom witnessed the occurrences of the morning. Curran, contrary to all his usual habits, was late for dinner, and at length arrived in the most admirably affected agitation. "Why, Mr. Curran, you have kept us a full hour waiting dinner for you," grumbled

out Lord Avonmore. "Oh, my dear lord, I regret it much; you must know it is not my custom, but—I've just been witness to a most melancholy occurrence." "My God! you seem terribly moved by it—take a glass of wine—what was it? What was it?"—"I will tell you, my lord, the moment I can collect myself—I had been detained at court—in the Court of Chancery—your lordship knows the Chancellor sits late."—"I do—I do—but go on."—"Well, my lord, I was hurrying here as fast as ever I could—I did not even change my dress—I hope I shall be excused for coming in my boots?"—"Poh, poh—never mind your boots—the point—come at once to the point of the story."—"Oh—I will, my good lord, in a moment—I walked here—I would not even wait to get the carriage ready it would have taken time, you know—now there is a market exactly in the road by which I had to pass—your lordship may perhaps recollect the market—do you?"—"To be sure I do—go on, Curran—go on with the story."—"I am very glad your lordship remembers the market, for I totally forget the name of it—the name—the name" "What the devil signifies the name of it, sir?—it's the Castle Market."—"Your lordship is perfectly right—it is called the Castle Market.—Well, I was passing through that very identical Castle Market, when I observed a butcher preparing to kill a calf—he had a huge knife in his hand—it was as sharp as a razor—the calf was standing beside him—he drew the knife to plunge it into the animal—just as he was in the act of doing so, a little boy about four years old—his only son—the loveliest little babe I ever saw, ran suddenly across his path—and he killed! O! my God, he killed—"—"The child!—the child!—the child!" vociferated Lord Avonmore.—"No, my lord, *the calf*,"

continued Curran, very coolly—"he killed the calf-but-your lordship is in the habit of anticipating." The universal laugh was thus raised against his lordship, and Curran declared that often afterwards, a first impression was removed more easily from the Court of Exchequer, by the recollection of the calf in the Castle Market, than by all the eloquence of the entire profession.

Amongst his other peculiarities, he was in the habit of occasional fits of absence. One day at a crowded dinner, the common toast of our *absent friends* was given. Curran, as usual, sat beside Lord Avonmore, who was immersed in one of his habitual reveries, altogether unconscious of what was passing. He maliciously aroused him—"Yelverton—Yelverton—the host just announced your health in very flattering terms; it is considered very cavalier in you not to have acknowledged it." Up started the unsuspecting Yelverton, and it was not till after a very eloquent speech that he was apprised of the hoax in which it had originated!

When the draft of the patent was sent to Lord Avonmore for his approbation, he called into his study a few friends, and among the rest Mr. Curran, to see if all was right. The wording ran in the usual form:—"To all to whom these letters patent shall come, greeting, We, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. &c." Mr. Curran, when the reader came to this part, exclaimed, "Stop, stop!"—"Why should he stop, sir?" said Lord Avonmore.—"Why, because it strikes me, my lord, that the *consideration* is set out too early in the deed."

THE DUKE OF RUTLAND.

During the administration of the Duke of Rutland, Mr. Curran continued in parliament and in opposition. Indeed, so unpopular was

this nobleman in Ireland, that, on his first presentation at the theatre he was publicly hooted by the populace. His vice-royalty was the scene of much stormy contention, and much political importance in the House of Commons, but he was himself wholly devoted to his private pleasures. It was said he was sent to drink the the Irish into good humour, and his court was the residence of riot and dissipation. The taste of the duke himself was by no means the most refined, nor was his majesty the most dignified in the world. A celebrated courtesan of the name of Peg Plunket occupied his attention much more than the privy-council, and sometimes unconsciously shared even the honours of royalty. It is a notorious fact, that, one evening, losing all recollection in her society, he forgot that he had been accompanied by a guard of honour, and morning dawned upon a troop of dragoons parading before her lodgings in attendance upon his excellency! I have heard Curran relate two anecdotes of this woman, which he said were in universal circulation at the time. The duke had gone in state to the theatre. The whole vice-regal suite was assembled—chamberlain, pages, aids-de-camp, &c. &c. The favourite, as usual, graced the lattices. A fellow in the gallery recognized her, and, wishing to mortify the duke, who was very unpopular, bellowed out most uncereemoniously, "Peg—Peg—who was your companion yesterday evening?"—"Manners, fellow, manners," retorted Peg, affecting to rebuke him. It is unnecessary to add that *Manners* is the name of the Rutland family.

At another time, a lady of rank, ignorant of the person to whom she had been referred, went to inquire the character of a dismissed servant. In a short time, however, she discovered her mistake, and was very naturally greatly disconcerted. "Oh," said she, immediately, with

the most perfect *sang-froid*, "I beg your ladyship may not be in the least alarmed—I shall let you away through the back door which I had made *for the accommodation of the Irish Bishops*."

The duke died, according to the account of Mr. Hardy, Lord Charlemont's biographer, of a fever produced by excessive dissipation, at the age of thirty-three!

LORD CLARE.

The consequence of an altercation in the House of Commons was a message from Mr. Fitzgibbon; and the parties, having met, were left to fire when they chose. "I never," said Mr. Curran, relating the circumstances of the meeting—"I never saw any one whose determination seemed more malignant than Fitzgibbon's; after I had fired, he took aim at me for at least half a minute, and, on its proving ineffectual, I could not help exclaiming to him, "It was not your fault, Mr. Attorney; you *were deliberate enough*." The Attorney-General declared his honour satisfied; and here, at least for the present, the dispute appeared to terminate.

Not here, however, terminated Fitzgibbon's animosity. His zeal, his politicks, his exertions on the subject of the Regency, and his unquestionable abilities, raised him to the seals on the resignation of Lord Lifford, during whose judicial life Curran was rising rapidly to the fame and emoluments of the chancery practice. From the moment of his elevation, Lord Clare, on every occasion, exhibited his hatred of the politician by his neglect of the advocate. At length the agents observed this marked hostility—the ear of the judge, as it is called, was lost—the client participated in the unpopularity of his counsel, and Curran's practice was soon confined exclusively to *Nisi Prius*. "I

years after,—"I made no compromise with power: I had the merit of provoking and despising the personal malice of every man in Ireland, who was the known enemy of the country. Without the walls of the court of justice, my character was pursued with the most persevering slander; and within those walls, though I was too strong to be beaten down by any judicial malignity, it was not so with my clients; and my consequent losses in professional income have never been estimated at less, as you must have often heard, than 30,000*l*." The incidents attendant upon this disagreement were, at times, ludicrous in the extreme. One day, when it was known that Curran was to make an elaborate argument in Chancery, Lord Clare brought a large Newfoundland dog upon the bench with him; and, during the progress of the argument, he lent his ear much more to the dog than to the barrister. This was observed at length by the entire profession. In time, the chancellor lost all regard for decency; he turned himself quite aside in the most material part of the case, and began, in full court, to fondle the animal. Curran stopped at once.—"Go on, go on, Mr. Curran," said Lord Clare, who certainly had much of the coxcomb in his manner—"O! I beg a thousand pardons, my lord; I really took it for granted that your lordship was *employed in consultation*."

HIS OPINIONS OF MEN.

Speaking of Dr. Johnson, whom he could not bear, he once violently exclaimed, "Sir, he was intolerant, and an intolerable dogmatist; in learning, a pedant; in religion, a bigot; in manners, a savage; and in politicks, a slave." Characterizing the late Lord Avonmore as a judge—"Oh," said he, "the poor fellow on his death-bed could have had no more selfish wish than that justice should be administered to

him in the world to come, in the same spirit with which he distributed it in this."

Speaking of Mr. Fox's social manners, I remember his using a very curious, and, as some have said, a very happy illustration.— "Fox," said he, "was by no means unsusceptible of humour; when I have trembled before him, I have caught a smile rippling the fine *Atlantick* of his countenance."

MR. PETER FINNERTY.

Mr. Finnerty was the publisher of a newspaper called *The Press*, to which the most distinguished literary characters of the opposition of that day contributed. I have every reason to believe that Mr. Curran himself was amongst the number. The circumstances in which the prosecution against Mr. Finnerty originated, were these: a person of the name of William Orr had been tried and convicted at a preceding assises of Carrick-fergus, before Lord Avonmore, for administering an unlawful oath. Some of the jury who tried Orr were induced subsequently to make an affidavit, declaring that they were intoxicated when they agreed to their verdict, and beseeching that mercy might be extended to the convict. The memoir was transmitted to the Castle. Orr was several times respited; but, after the mature deliberation of the Privy Council, the law was allowed to take its course, and he was accordingly executed. His fate excited great interest at the time, and the circumstances attending it un-

derwent much discussion. A letter, bearing the signature of Marcus, appeared in the *Press* upon the subject, couched in very indignant and very eloquent language. Mr. Finnerty was indicted as publisher, tried, convicted, and pilloried in consequence. The result, however, was considered very far from discreditable to him, and his punishment was regarded as a sort of penal triumph. He was accompanied by some of the most leading men in the country, and repeatedly and enthusiastically cheered by the populace. The political feeling of the day was strongly in his favour; the trial, on which his paper had descanted, was in the midst of parlance a very singular one; and, more than all, it was generally, and, I believe, truly understood, that Mr. Finnerty might have averted the prosecution from himself, by surrendering Marcus up to the vengeance of the government. This, however, his principles restrained him from doing; and his highly honourable determination converted, in the estimation of many, the convict into the martyr. Mr. Curran, who managed his defence, was not ashamed of his intimacy, and, to my knowledge, held him to the day of his death in a very high degree of estimation. Finnerty was one of the few admitted to his funeral. Curran's speech, upon the trial of this gentleman, is a masterpiece of eloquence, and it is difficult to select one passage more splendid than another. [*To be Continued.*]

From the European Magazine, for April, 1818.

EXTRACTS FROM A LAWYER'S PORTFOLIO.

FAMILY HISTORY.

WHOSOEVER has visited the central inn at Carlise in a wet day, must remember how vainly the traveller looks from the windows for amusement unless he understands horses sufficiently well to admire the various kinds which brin two or three dozen west-coun-

try graziers and as many shrewd northern drovers into the stable-yard from a Whitsontryste. It was more amusement to me to remark the gradations between the well-filled gray coat and oil skin cap which distinguishes the plump Englishman, and the weather-beaten plaid of his competitors. One of the latter, a lean, sinewy, russet faced man, whose attire promised more acquaintance with cattle than books, began one with me by lamenting that the rain would not allow him to walk on the castle walls or the race-ground, as the inn did not afford a single volume, not even Burns or the "Tales of my Landlord."—Such an evidence of good taste induced me to cast my eyes on his portmanteau, whereon I saw the name of Ben Johnson inscribed, with a sentiment of respect which a second glance at his honest countenance confirmed. Even an Anandale farmer must retain, I supposed, something of the literary inspiration attached to that name, and we began a long discourse on the merits of the Ayrshire ploughman and Ettrick shepherd, which ended in my new friend Benjamin's renewed regrets that we had neither Guy Mannering nor Rob Roy.—"Sir," continued he, "I know very well who he means by Dandie Dinmont, though some people say it is I—and I know Rob Roy too, for I lived many a year with his second cousin's aunt's grandsons, and he was the only one of the family that deserved to be hanged. Lord! how true it is what he says there of Skipton in Craven! But the worst is, though I know all those stories by heart, and could tell them just as he tells 'em, I always want to be reading them again, and feel just as if I did not know how they would end."

"You have supplied the reason," was my answer: "your historian

paints from truth, and truth has the same advantage over fable which your strong plaid has over my black silk gown. But since truth delights us in the dress of romance, as an honest man looks well in your many-coloured tartan, here is the fragment of an old memoir sufficiently mysterious and true, and therefore both respectable and touching."—My auditor filled his glass, laid his mull aside, and lighted his indispensable pipe, while I opened the first sheet of the old pamphlet I had found behind the shining grate of the best inn-parlour, dated 1710.

"The beginning of the Princess's kindness for me had an early date;—we used to play together when she was a child, and she even then expressed a particular fondness for me. On her marriage with Prince ———, at her own earnest request I was added to her household, possibly because the first lady of the bed-chamber was a person whose discourse and manner (though the Princess thought they agreed very well together) could not recommend her to so young a mistress. For she looked like a madwoman, and talked like a scholar. Favour with a princess engaged me to her by a sentiment which I choose to call *honour* rather than gratitude or duty; because while it implies all the justice and affection of both, it seems to express a more disinterested principle of action than either.

"Every body knows that the coldness between the Princess and Queen arose from the former desiring an independent settlement, which, as she was told, ought to have been taken in any way her superiours pleased. But she answered, "that she could not think herself wrong in desiring a security for what was to support her."—The Queen replied, with an imperious air—"What friends have you but

the King and me?"—and the next day the Princess received this letter.

"Having something to say to you, which I know will not be very pleasing, I choose rather to write it first, being unwilling to surprize you, though I think what I am going to tell you should not, if you give yourself time to think that never any body was suffered to live at court in my Lord M—'s circumstances.—I hope you do me the justice to believe, it is much against my will that I now tell you, it is very unfit Lady M—— should stay with you, since that gives her husband so just a pretence of being where he ought not to be.

"I think I might have expected you should have spoke to me of it. But now I must tell you it was very unkind in a relative, would have been uncivil in an equal, and I need not say I have more to claim. Which, though my kindness would make me never exact, yet when I see the use you would make of it, I must tell you, Lady M—— must not continue with you. At some other time we shall reason the business calmly; which I shall willingly do, or any thing else which may shew it shall never be my fault if we do not live kindly together. Nor will I ever be by choice but your truly loving and affectionate

"——, Regina."

"When my mistress received this singular letter, she did not forget that it related to the faithful person whom she had once been advised to rely on and keep as her 'most kind and true friend;' that it was written by one whose want of sensibility had been proved by her cold and careless entrance into the bedchamber where the late King (still living, though displaced) had always slept, and where she amused herself with viewing the counterpane and trimming, as idle travellers examine an inn-keeper's. The

Princess might have removed all this cause of dissension between her and the highest person in the realm, had she accepted my frank offer to depart, but it was refused with fears and trembling. And she rather chose to encounter the insolence of the Queen's messengers, who, when they brought an inquiry respecting the Prince, actually passed her, while sitting in the same room, to address themselves to him. Yet the Princess strove to conciliate the Queen; and when her condition compelled her to confine herself on a sofa, and a dangerous period was approaching, she sent a dutiful message, alleging them as excuses for not waiting on her Majesty. Once, and only once, the Queen visited her in her forlorn indisposition. The salutation, without expressing the least concern respecting her health, or even touching her hand, was this—'I have made the first step by coming to you, and I now expect you should make the next by removing Lady M——.' The Princess only answered faltering, and as the Queen herself remarked, looking paler than death, "I have never in all my life disobeyed your Majesty, except in this one particular, which will some time or other appear as unreasonable to the requester as to me." Upon which the Queen rose up, and went away, repeating to the Prince as he led her to the coach, the same thing she had said to the Princess. They never met more, and company was forbidden to wait upon my mistress, to whom, wishing to save her from indignities seldom offered to the heir of a crown, I again proposed my voluntary retirement, and received this letter, which I transcribe, not because it was the most fervent and affectionate, but because it was the briefest of very many which remain in my possession.

"In obedience to my dear——,

I have told the Prince all he desired me ; and he is so far from being of another opinion, if there had been occasion he would have strengthened me in my resolutions, and we both beg of you never to mention so cruel a thing more. Can you think either of us so wretched, that, for the sake of £. 20,000, and to be tormented from morning to night by flattering knaves and fools, we should forsake those to whom we have such obligations, and whose misfortunes we have caused ? Besides, can you believe we will stoop to ———,* who from the first moment has used us at this rate ? How would ——— laugh at me, and please himself with having got the better ? And, which is much more, how would my conscience reproach me for having sacrificed it, my honour, reputation, and all the substantial comforts of life, for transitory interest, which even to those who make it their idol never affords any real satisfaction, much less to a virtuous mind. No, my dear ———, never believe your faithful ——— will ever submit. She can wait with patience for a sunshine day ; and if she does not live to see it, yet she hopes England will flourish again. Once more give me leave to beg you would be so kind as never to speak of parting more ; for let what will happen, it is the only thing that can make me miserable.

Tuesday morning. * * * * *

“ The sunshine day came, however ; my patroness prevailed over all her enemies, and her levees were thronged with visitors, amongst whom my Lord Caernarvon merri-ly said, ‘ I hope madam, you will remember that I came to wait upon you, when none of *this company* did ? She consulted me on all occasions, and would have loaded me

with favours ; but I only begged her to advance one of my aunt’s poor daughters from the station of rocker to that of bed-chamber-woman, and her brother (a ragged tall boy, whom the bottle-men afterwards called honest John Hill) was made my lord’s aid-de-camp, though he thought him good-for-nothing. Not long after this, I went to pay my respects to my mistress in the Christmas-holidays, and plainly perceived she was uneasy. She stood all the while I was with her ; and when I stooped to kiss her hand, raised me with a very cold embrace, and without speaking one word, let me go. Now I remembered, that having gone very privately, on a day before, by a secret passage, from my lodgings to the bed-chamber, on a sudden my cousin, not knowing I was there, came in with the boldest and gayest air possible ; but seeing me, stopped, and changing her manner into a most solemn courtesy, inquired if my mistress rung, and went out again. It was plain there existed some secret between them ; but, as honest Howell wisely saith, ‘ A secret is too much for one, enough for two, but too little for three.’— And much more wisely he also saith, ‘ From them whom I trust may God defend me, but from those I do not trust I will defend myself.’—After much thought on the woman I had raised from the dust, and on her I had served so long with promises of unalterable affection, I wrote to the latter, on the 27th of December, these few words :—

“ ‘ If ——— will be so just as to reflect and examine her last reception—how very different from what it has been ! you cannot wonder at my reproaches, ———. My temper is plain and sincere, and ——— did like it for many years. And if ——— has any remains of the tenderness she once professed for her faithful friend, I would beg she might be treated one of these two ways : Ei-

* These blanks are in the original. Copies of them and of this narrative were published under the Duchess of M.’s authority, by Geo. Hawkins, at Milton’s Head, between the two Temple Gates.

ther with the openness and confidence of a friend, as she has been for twenty years; or else in the manner necessary for the post she is in. And if she pleases to choose one of these ways, or any others, I promise to follow it if possible, and on all occasions to shew that — never had a more faithful servant.'

"My patroness hardly noticed this appeal; and my husband, then in the height of a glory he might have made perpetual, was treated as if his successes in her cause were injuries to her self-love. He wrote to me as usual in cypher from the camp, professing his zeal for 83 and his distrust of 91, by which he meant our lady and her new advisers. Her change was more distinctly complained of in another letter, which I sent to her enclosed in one from myself—

"I cannot help sending this to shew how exactly my lord agrees in my opinion, that he has now no interest with you.—Yet I think he will be surprised to hear, that when I had taken so much pains to put your jewels in a way I thought you would like, my consin made you refuse to wear them in so unkind a manner. I will make no reflections, only that you chose a very wrong day to mortify me, when you were just going to return thanks for a victory obtained by my husband!"

"On the sixth of April I entreated an audience, and the page who announced me staid longer than usual: long enough, it is to be supposed, to deliberate whether the favour of admission should be granted, and to settle the measures of behaviour. When I entered, and began to speak, she interrupted me, by repeating, 'Whatever you have to say may be put in writing.' Though her face was turned away, I continued to speak, begging to know the offence laid to my charge,

but not the names of the authors or relators. She replied, 'You desired no answer, and shall have none.' These words she repeated constantly, as was her custom when she had been provided with a phrase to shield her against all argument. When she came to the door, streams of tears flowed against my will, and the most disrespectful words I ever uttered escaped me—'I have despised interest to serve faithfully and rightly—I have done enough to move compassion, even where all love was absent—but this inhumanity will not be unpunished.'—She replied, '*that will be to myself:*'—and thus ended our last conversation, after a friendship of twenty-seven years. After such high power and envied distinctions, my lord and myself sunk into retirement, happy enough that, like the great and good Lord Bacon, we were not obliged to beg a cup of wine from courtiers, and to carry a wallet after bearing the sword of state."

Here ended this singular memoir; and my honest auditor, sending a long column of smoke from his pipe, added, "Truly, if it had not begun about a prince and princess, I should have thought it had been a tale of Lady Julias and Lady Rosas, such as my daughter reads at school—but I dozed a little, I doubt, at t'other end,"

"No wonder, my good friend," I replied, "for this memoir gives us truth, not wit or good sense. Yet, as I said before, it is respectable, because it relates to the most distinguished persons of a past age: and touching, as it proves how little the noblest stations are exempt from the petty passions of human nature, and how deeply those passions influence the great events of an empire. These letters, with frivolous and sentimental mystery enough in them to decorate a novel, are written by the invincible Duke

of Marlborough's wife, and her heroines are Queen Mary and Queen Anne!"

My lowland Ben Johnson took a large pinch from his horn mull, and replied, "There's no great difference in the folly, mayhap; yet I'd as lief be a King-fool as a common one. An' ye're a gownsman, sir, ye may chance to have a liking to thae kind of cattle, and I can tell ye as strange a tale of the Clanroy M'Gregors, and this very inn, as a justice-clerk need put on paper. It's like ye may have heard

a jeer in Carlisle about a West-riding man who took too many good cups with a highland knave, and woke in a sack next morn: but I'll no believe it, for what says the old song?

"Its a wearifu' task to swim by night
Safe over the Tweed or Tyne,
But a harder to deal wi' a Yorkshire wight,
And gi' him his fill of wine."

Then nodding with a shrewd smile of confirmation, he began his own story.*

* See Robinson's Magazine, p. 39.

NOTICE OF A SCIENTIFICK TOUR TO LONDON EDINBURGH, AND THE SHETLAND ISLANDS,

By M. Biot, of the Royal Institute of France.

From the Edinburg Magazine.

AMONG the many men of science by whom the French metropolis is at present adorned, scarcely any individual ranks higher in publick estimation than M. Biot. The extraordinary interest which his late scientifick expedition excited in the learned world, as well as the satisfaction which many of its members in this country derived from the society of M. Biot, must render it gratifying to a great body of our readers to learn both the manner in which the objects which he had in view were fulfilled, and the impressions of Scotland and Scottish society which this eminent philosopher carried with him. We have been so fortunate as to procure from a learned friend of M. Biot, a copy of his Report to the French Institute, upon what he did and observed during this interesting tour; and shall now lay the substance of it before our readers.

As soon as astronomers began to observe with attention the movements of the heavenly bodies, the globular form of the earth became manifest; but many ages elapsed, before they were able to measure its circumference with any degree of accuracy. Repeated attempts made, both by the ancients and by the Arabian philosophers, presented errors of the most enormous magnitude. It was not till 1670, that Picard, in the line formed through Picardy, made an exact measurement of the degree of the meridian, and thereby ascertained the entire circumference of the globe. This important observation enabled Newton to establish his grand law of gravitation, which had not agreed with the erroneous measurements before made. No suspicion, however, had yet been entertained, that the figure of the earth departed in any degree from that of a regular globe. But two years after, Richer, in an astronomical journey to Cayenne, discovered a variation in the action of the pendulum, which appeared to indicate that the earth was broader at the equator than at the poles. Newton, applying to this observation the principle of gravitation, proved that it was the natural result of a planet moving on

its axis, provided its elements were once in a state of fluidity. The French Academy of Sciences, after some unsatisfactory attempts to ascertain the fact by measurements confined to France, resolved upon sending two grand expeditions, one to the equator and the other to the arctick circle. Condamine was at the head of the former, Maupertuis of the latter; and they fully confirmed the general principle of Richer and Newton. The irregularity, however, in the figure of the earth was so small, that its precise amount could not be ascertained by the imperfect instruments then in use. These, in the progress of time, were constantly improved; and when the French government conceived the idea of making the circumference of the globe the basis of their new metrical system, they employed Messrs. Delambre and Mechain, two of their most eminent men of science, to measure, by a series of triangles, the meridian between Dunkirk and the Balearic Islands. This grand and difficult operation was executed, amid every obstacle, with a precision before unknown, new instruments for the purpose being invented by M. Borda. Mechain, however, as he was completing his observations on the coast of Valencia, fell a sacrifice to fatigue; so that the work was interrupted, till it was resumed by Messrs. Biot and Arago, who completed it in the most satisfactory manner. They made also a number of observations with the pendulum, both at the extreme station, and on various parts of the line measured by their predecessors, and the general agreement of the results established the whole in a manner which admitted of no dispute. Meantime, in Britain, a similar survey, begun by general Roy, had been completed by Colonel Mudge, and extended from the south of England to the north of Scotland.

To the French scientifick bodies, however, it appeared highly desirable, both to verify these observations, and to connect them with the French survey, so as to form an unbroken line between Orkney and Fromentera. This task was zealously undertaken by M. Biot; and we are happy to find that he experienced, on the part of this country, the most active aid and co-operation. "To wish a thing useful to the sciences, (says this liberal and enlightened foreigner,) is to secure before hand the consent of the English men of science, and the approbation of the government." Having made arrangements with Sir Joseph Banks, he set out from Paris in the month of May, carrying with him all the necessary instruments. At Dover he received them entire, under the seal of the customhouse, without duty or examination, "as if he had not changed his country." His emotions on meeting the illustrious President of the Royal Society are expressed with peculiar warmth.

"Why cannot I paint what I felt on seeing, for the first time, the venerable companion of Cook! Distinguished by long voyages,—remarkable by an extent of understanding, and an elevation of sentiment, which lead him to take an equal interest in the progress of every branch of human knowledge,—possessed of rank, of a great fortune, of universal respect, Sir Joseph Banks has made all these advantages the patrimony of the learned of all nations. His benevolence is so natural, so easy, that to him by whom it is experienced, it appears almost to be in virtue of a newly acquired right, while, at the same time, it is so kind, that it leaves to you all the individuality of gratitude. We have here a noble example of authority, founded entirely upon esteem, attachment, respect, free and voluntary confidence, and the claims to which consist solely in an

inexhaustible good will, and the recollection of services rendered, while its long and undisputed possession implies singular virtues, and an exquisite delicacy, when we think that all this power was to be formed, maintained, and exercised among equals."

M. Biot now set out for Edinburgh, accompanied by Colonel Mudge, and fixed his first station in Leith Fort. He warmly acknowledges the attentions paid to his accommodation, particularly by Colonel Sir Howard Elphinstone. A portable observatory was constructed for his use; and, in order to give to the pendulum the requisite solidity, stones of enormous size were fastened in the walls with iron chains. Colonel Mudge's health not permitting him to assist, his place was satisfactorily supplied by his son, Captain Richard Mudge. "My attention to these duties," says he, "did not prevent me from casting a stolen glance upon all that is beautiful and good in this Scotland, *the abode of morality and intelligence*. But, foreseeing that such objects would render somewhat too dry the minute detail of weight, length, and measure, I resolved not to pay any close attention to them till my return."

The Orkneys had been the original destination; but, at the suggestion of Colonel Mudge, it was resolved to carry on the survey to Shetland, by resting the summits of triangles on the Isles of Faira and Foula. Having made a short stay at Aberdeen, where he states himself to have experienced the most gratifying hospitality, M. Biot set sail, on the 9th of July, for Shetland. The first aspect of this country is described with animation.

"At length the peaks of Shetland appeared in the clouds; and, on the 18th July, we landed not far from the southern point of these islands, where the currents of the Atlantick,

encountering those which come from the sea of Norway, cause a perpetual swell and tempest. The desolate aspect of the soil was in unison with the gloomy approach. I saw no longer those fortunate isles of Spain, those smiling regions, that garden of Valencia, where the orange and citron trees in flower diffuse their perfumes round the tomb of a Scipio, or over the august ruins of the ancient Saguntum. Here, on landing upon a coast shattered by the waves, the eye perceives only a land, moist, desert, covered with stones and moss; mountains broken into fragments, undermined by the inclemency of the elements; not a tree, not a bush, the view of which might soften this savage aspect; here and there a few scattered huts, whose roofs, covered with grass, let out into the fog the thick smoke with which they are filled. Musing on the gloom of this abode, where we were to remain exiled for several months, we proceeded, not without difficulty, across plains and hills without a road, towards the small assemblage of stone houses, which forms the capital, called Lerwick. There we began to feel, that the social virtues of a country are not to be measured by the appearance of poverty or riches. It is impossible to conceive a more frank or cordial hospitality than that with which we were received. Persons who had learned our names only a moment before, eagerly offered their services to conduct us wherever we wished. As soon as they learned the object of our voyage, they gave us of themselves every information which could be useful; they collected it for us, and transmitted it with the same interest, as if it had been a personal concern of their own. We received, in particular, much essential aid from Dr. Edmonstone, an intelligent physician, who has published a very good description of Shetland, and who re-

collected, with pleasure, having attended at Paris the course of our colleague M. Dumeril."

M. Biot had at first proposed Lerwick for the theatre of his operations ; but, on farther consideration, he determined to remove to the small Isle of Unst, half a degree farther north. After a stormy passage, he reached that island, where he was received with every kind of hospitality and attention by a brother of Edmonstone, who happened to reside there. It was difficult at first to find a place where the large instruments could be put. At length the pendulum and its apparatus were fixed in a large sheep-cot, built of thick walls to resist winter storms. The portable observatory and the repeating circle were put up in Mr. Edmonstone's garden. Captain Mudge being unfortunately taken ill, and obliged to leave the island, Mr. Edmonstone suggested the plan of employing an intelligent carpenter, who like the rest of his countrymen, understood reading, writing, and accounts. In making, however, an astronomer of a carpenter, checks were necessary ; and M. Biot's science enabled him to employ some, which appeared to his companion almost miraculous. These checks, however, became daily less requisite ; and M. Biot found this assistant answer every necessary purpose. In the course of two months, he had completely thirty-five series of the pendulum, of five or six hours each, fourteen hundred observations of latitude, and twelve hundred observations of the height of the sun and stars ; and these immense labours afforded him the satisfaction of having fully completed the great object of his mission. In the interval, he derived great satisfaction from the intercourse of the inhabitants, of whom he draws a very interesting picture. He says,

" I could not at first conceive what charm could retain them in this wintry, stormy country, without a road, without a tree on the mountains or plains upon which the eye can repose ; a region of rain, of wind, and tempest, where the atmosphere, constantly impregnated with a cold moisture, mitigates the severity of winter, only on condition of allowing no summer. What attaches them to it is the peace, the profound, the unalterable peace which they enjoy. For twenty-five years, in which Europe has been tearing her own vitals, the noise of a drum has not been heard in Unst, scarce in Lerwick ; for twenty-five years the door of the house which I inhabited has remained open night and day. The people here receive the news of Europe as they read the history of the last century ; these recall no personal misfortune, and kindle no animosity ; they feel not that interest, or rather that fury of the moment, which is produced by the frantick exaltation of all the passions ; they philosophize tranquilly on events which seem to belong to another world.

" This calm, this habitual security, gives to social relations a charm elsewhere unknown. Here all that belong to the class of proprietors are either relations, or allies, or friends, and friendships are like alliances. But as in this world evil must accompany good, this pleasure of living like a great family, is sometimes dearly bought ; it makes them feel, with extreme pain, the death of that small number of individuals on whom they have concentrated their affections ; such an event is to the whole circle like a family misfortune. They experience almost equal grief when any of their friends depart to seek his fortune elsewhere, which, from the poverty of the islands, is but too common.

This departure is felt by those who in search of a better habitation, are remain like a death; and, indeed, seldom revisited." the Shetland Islands, when quitted [To be Concluded.]

VARIETIES.

From the British Lady's Magazine.

INSTANCES OF HUMILITY.

WILLEGIS, archbishop of Mentz, acceded to that elevated condition from the very lowest state of meanness. He was the son of a poor carter, and not only caused the following inscription to be engraved in the most conspicuous parts in his palace. "*Willegis remember thy parentage*," but had the wheels of a cart hung up in the cathedral of Mentz; and from that time they have composed the arms of that see.

From the same.

NOBLE ADDRESS.

History perhaps does not boast of a more noble and laconick address, than that which was made by the great Duke de Grammont to the King of Spain, when he demanded the Infante, his daughter, in marriage, in the name of his sovereign. "Sire," said he, "the king, my master, gives you peace; and to you, madam, his heart and crown."

From the same.

HISTORICAL ANECDOTE.

After the execution of Monsieur de Barnevelt, his sons conspired against Maurice, Prince of Orange, who procured the death of his father. The plot was discovered, and the eldest son condemned to be beheaded. Madame de Barnevelt, on this melancholy occasion, went and threw herself at the prince's feet, beseeching him to pardon her son. The prince told her he was greatly surprised, that she, who had not solicited a pardon for her husband, should now intercede for her son: to which she made this truly heroick answer:—"I did not sue for a par-

don for my husband, because he was innocent; but I implore it for my son, because he is guilty!" The prince granted her request.

From the same.

GENTEEL ECONOMY. A certain lady whose taste is equal to her economy, was under the necessity of asking a friend to dinner, the following is the bill of fare, and the expense of each dish, which was found on the carpet:

At top, two herrings	-	1d
Middle, one ounce and a half of butter, melted	-	$\frac{1}{2}$
Bottom, three mutton chops cut thin	-	2
One side, one pound small potatoes	-	$\frac{1}{2}$
On the other side, pickled cabbage	-	$\frac{1}{2}$
Fish removed, two larks, plenty of crumbs	-	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Mutton removed, french roll boiled for pudding	-	$\frac{1}{2}$
Parsley for garnish	-	$\frac{1}{2}$

7d.

The dinner was served up on china, looked light, tasty and pretty, the table small, and the dishes well proportioned. We hope each newly married lady will keep this as a lesson; it is worth knowing how to serve up seven dishes, consisting of a dish of fish, joint of mutton, couple of fowls, pudding, vegetables and sauce for seven-pence.

From the same.

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.

'Tis dangerous for a man to marry a woman who has too much wit. Whoever understands in the least

degree his own interest, will keep free of such an engagement.

The most agreeable company a young man of gallantry can have is that of a virtuous woman.

Women more easily love men of whom they have conferred a benefit, than those who ruin themselves for them.

The study of knowing one's self is very mortifying to mankind, because it leads them to the knowledge of their imperfections. Most people who begin this work are frightened at it; the consequence of which is, that they immediately abandon it.

Generally speaking, all men are fools, or what is the same thing, every man hath his peculiar folly. All the prudence of the wisest man consists in knowing how to conceal his faults and imperfections so well, that they are not discoverable.

From the New Monthly Magazine.
WOTTON AND GRAY.

SIR HENRY WOTTON, whose history has been so well related by honest Isaack Walton, spent the close of his very busy life in Eton College, when he entered into deacon's orders, and he became provost. The year before his death he said on returning to the College from an excursion to Winchester: "How useful was that advice of a holy monk, who persuaded his friend to perform his customary devotions in a constant place, because in that place, we usually meet with those very thoughts which possessed us at our last being there: and (added Sir Henry) I find it thus far experimentally true, that my now being in that school, and seeing that very place where I sat when I was a boy, occasioned me to remember those very thoughts of my youth which then possessed me; sweet thoughts indeed, that promised my growing years numerous pleasures without mixtures of cares; and

these to be enjoyed when time (which I therefore thought slow paced) had changed my youth into manhood; but age and experience have taught me, that these were but empty hopes; for I have always found it true as my Saviour did foretel, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Nevertheless I saw there a succession of boys using the same recreations, and questionless possessed with the same thoughts that then possessed me. "Thus one generation succeeds another, both in their lives, recreations, hopes, fears and death."

Let the whole of this beautiful sentiment be compared with Gray's Ode on a distant prospect of Eton College, and I am much mistaken if the reader will not at once see the original germ of that pathetick composition.

Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
Ah fields belov'd in vain,
Where once my careless childhood stay'd,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

But it is in the description of the sportive joys of the youthful train that the sage instructs the poet.

Gay hope is theirs, by fancy led
Less pleasing when possess;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast;
Their's buxom health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever new,
And lively cheer of vigour born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
That fly th' approach of morn.
Alas, regardless of their doom,
The little victims play;
No sense have they of ills to come,
No care beyond to day:
Yet see how all around them wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black misfortune's baleful train!
Ah shew them where in ambush stand
To seize their prey the murderous band,
Ah! tell them they are men.

POETRY.

From the Edinburgh Magazine.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

HOW can I forget thee! my youths'
brightest Star!—
As, with liveliest thrill, and tenderest
emotion,
'The heart of the mariner, o'er the lone
ocean,
Beats high, when the beacon is hailed
from afar;
So I, when the shadows of fortune are
dark,
When the lightnings sweep o'er, with the
flash of derision,
Look back to the summers, that fled like
a vision,
When thou wert my day-star--the dove
of my ark!
How can I forget thee! alas! 'tis in
vain:
Oh! kindest welcomed, and earliest
chosen,
My thoughts must be changed, and my
heart must be frozen,
If the stamp of thy love they could
cease to retain.
Once more could on earth such felicity
be---
Then, all that employs, and ensnares,
and bewitches,
Fame, and fortune, and power, and ambi-
tion, and riches,
Were wanting, when weighed in the
balance with thee!
Oh then there was scarcely a cloud in
our clime:
Our bosoms were light, and the landscape
was yellowed
With beautiful sunshine, whose hues
now are mellowed
By the delicate touch of the pencil of
time.
Yet what are the pleasures of earth but
a dream!
How short is their reign, and how few is
their number,
They melt, like the bright-woven vision
of slumber,
Or the bow that o'erarches the lapse of
the stream.
Are delicate feelings a bliss or a
curse?---
I know not--I care not---but even from
childhood
I hated contention, and flew to the wild
wood;

They made me alive to vexation---no
worse---

For they kept me from all that entices
the young:
While others were social, I wandered all
lonely,
I loved but few friends, and of women---
thee only----
How well---hearts are dumb, and I trust
not my tongue?
To tell thee my feelings now, words
were in vain---
As I look on thy face as I think of the
blessings---
Gone---gone---when thou fondly would'st
chide my caressings:
Thou canst chide me no more---since
we meet not again.
The darkest and brightest of life have
been mine;
The latter is past, and the former around
me;
Like a leaf of the summer the canker
bath found me;
Farewell!--oh! may happiness ever be
thine!

From the British Lady's Magazine.

SONNET.

"Remember!"—Yes, time shall not
take
Thy image from my breast:
"Remember!"—Yes, till life forsake
That heart thou oft has blest.
"Remember!"—Yes, when bright-ey'd
morn
Brings joy to all but me;
When fancy points where bliss was born,
Then I'll remember thee.
"Remember!"—Yes, at noon-tide hour
And when the dews of eve
Enbalm each fading, transient flow'r,
That smil'd but to deceive.
"Remember!"—Yes, tho' friendship's
joys
Be lost to me for ever;
Though ev'ry pensive echo sighs
"Farewel', farewell for ever!"

M.